Externally aided Projects for Tripura

153. SHRI KHAGEN DAS: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government of Tripura has not received any externally aided project in the State so far despite several assurances; and

(b) whether proposals of the State Government for sanction of externally aided projects are under consideration of the Central Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) No Sir. There is no State/Multistate Sector project under implementation in the State of Tripura. However, there are a number of Central Sector projects viz. National Leprosy Elimination, Malaria Control, Reproductive Child Health, Second National HIV/AIDS Control and the Rubber Development, in which the State of Tripura is one of the beneficiary States.

(b) There are two project proposals from the Government of Tripura for possible external assistance, namely, "State Road Project" and "Tripura Agricultural Development Project" which are at various stages of processing.

RBI Guidelines for Improving Conditions of Currency Notes

†154. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Reserve Bank of India have issued some guidelines to all the banks for improving conditions of currency notes and their maintenance;

(b) if so, what are these guideUnes and the reasons for not following the said guidelines by all the banks; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government for improving the miserable conditions of the currency notes and what action Government propose to take against the erring banks?

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†Original notice of the question received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) to (c) With a view to bring about improvement in cash handling at the branches of all the banks, Reserve Bank of India has issued a circular to all nationalised banks including State Bank of India and private sector banks advising them to do away with stapling of fresh bank note packets supplied by the Note Presses, and re-issuable packets so as to enable, the public at large to handle notes in a convenient manner, prevent water mark getting damaged etc. These instructions have been reiterated from time to time.

The condition of currency notes deteriorates with time. However, soiled and damaged notes may be exchanged for new ones. Following action has been taken to facilitate exchange of soiled notes:—

(i) In January, 1999, RBI advised their Regional Offices to issues a Press Communique or as a paid advertisement (a text of which was sent to them) in all leading newspapers in English, Hindi and local languages, about the note-exchange facilities available with Public Sector Banks. These banks were also advised that they should keep a display board about the existence of such facilities, at a prominent place in their premises.

(ii) With a view to retrieving the soiled notes of Re. 1, Rs. 2 and Rs. 5 denominations from circulation, as their printing had been stopped from 1995 due to Government Policy of coinisation of these denominations, a special drive has been launched by the Reserve Bank of India. For greater dissemination of information regarding availability of this facility, an advertisement was issued in various newspapers on 10th February, 1999. This advertisement was released in leading newspapers and important national magazines on 7th March, 1999.

(iii) In order to have a wider impact and increased awareness, one audio spot and one 60 second audio jingle on exchange of soiled notes were broadcast on All India Radio during April/May, 1999. Video spots of 15 second duration on exchange of soiled notes of Re. 1, Rs. 2 and Rs.. 5 denominations were also telecast in April/May, 1999.

(iv) In order to mop up the soiled notes of Re. 1, Rs. 2, and Rs. 5

denominations from circulation, Regional Offices of RBI have opened separate counters for the exchange of notes. Regional Offices have also identified important currency chests for this purpose. After ensuring that adequate supplies are available in each of the denominations at these chests, they issued advertisements in the local newspapers and also used electronic media so that the facility was brought to the notice of the public. Some of public sector bank branches as also the Regional Offices of the RBI arranged mobile counters (vans) in City/Mandi/Market area etc. for distribution of coins in exchange of soiled notes.

(v) RBI has published in October, 1999, a booklet titled 'Your Guide to Money matters' which contains, *inter-alia,* information on facilities for exchange of soiled notes. This information is also available on RBI website; and

(vi) Banks have been advised to sort out only very good quality notes for re-issuing to the public.

Losses Accumulated by Indian Bank

155. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Bank has accumulated losses exceeding Rupees two thousand crores completely wiping out the net worth despite having been given dole twice to recapitalise its balance sheet;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) what are the reasons for the continuous losses so as to wipe out its net worth despite receiving dole twice; and

(d) the manner in which Government propose to tackle the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL): (a) and (b) An amount of Rs. 1,850 crore was provided upto the year 1998-99 to the Indian Bank by way of recapitalisation assistance. As on 31.3.99 Indian